

INTRODUCTION

131 The Bororo live in the western part of Mato Grosso,
178 Brazil. The area they inhabit was formerly much larger, ex-
tending on the east across the Bolivian border, on the north
[61] to Cuiabá, and on the south to Coxim. Today there are only
about five hundred Bororo, most of whom live in two areas,
one on the upper part of the São Lourenço river, and the
[65] other to the south of the Rio das Mortes. The first is en-
[71] trusted to the Indian Protection Service, the second to the
[17] Salesian missionaries. The territory of the Bororo is becom-
ing smaller and smaller because their lands have been taken
by cattle ranchers.

241 The Bororo are fishermen, hunters, and gatherers, and
[22] they also cultivate small fields of corn, manioc, and rice.
However, they are not fond of farming and they put relatively
little work into their plantations. They cut and burn trees
and brush, they sow, and when the crop is ready they harvest;
weeding is practically nonexistent.

361 The villages are circular, with the men's house and the
ceremonial plaza in the middle and the women's houses around
[51] them. Unmarried men and initiated boys sleep in the men's
[52] house. Married men sleep and eat in their wives' houses, but
they too spend most of the day in the men's house making tools
and ornaments or just chatting.

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584 Colbacchini (o.c., pp. 55 and 56) writes about the Bororo:
"In general and in the majority of cases it is the woman who precedes the man in the marriage proposal. The young woman who feels led to esteem a young man and who wishes to be joined to him consults in particular the mother, if she is still alive, or the older sister. If such a proposal is well received by the mother, the latter will then take an active part in satisfying the daughter's wishes. She will then try to find out, among her friends and the lad's relatives, whether the daughter would be readily accepted as a wife. In the affirmative case, the mother and the daughter prepare some dishes which they judge or know will be to the taste of the young man, and the mother of the pretendant, or in her absence the older sister, knowing that the lad /130/ is home, goes at noon to look for him, taking the prepared delicacies, in a wicker basket, in order at the same time to make to him the proposal and official request. Upon entering the house, she will address the young man, who will be sitting near the fire working on the arrows; and she will say to him: -- A wogae i roino -- (I came looking for you) -- and she will make him the proposal. If the young man wishes to accept it, he will say nothing, but will stretch out his hand to receive the gift sent, which he will place at his side. And with this gesture the request is granted. The agreement concluded, jubilant with joy, she will immediately take the
[591] good news to her daughter. Both the mother and the relatives of the bride then set about preparing the house, because it is
[513] the custom that the man goes to live in the wife's house. They will prepare the fire, the straw mat for sleeping, the receptacle
584 for water; afterwards they will cook something and wait. At
585 nightfall, the lad will retire to the bride's house and, without saying anything, will enter and place himself beside the one who from this moment on is his wife. The mother or the sister will go to the house of the bridegroom to get what belongs

dren. One special house, larger than the others, is built in the center of the plaza. There the unmarried men sleep, and married men work and perform many of their ceremonies, taking advantage of the seclusion it provides from the women and children. All persons in the Bororo village are divided into two groups, or moieties, membership in which is hereditary. The moieties co-operate in work and compete with each other in recreation.

The Bororo were once among the fiercest tribes of Brazil, and warred against whites and other Indians alike. Today the few villages that remain

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177 in hammocks, pieces of which they cut off, and in tablecloths --
291 a true Brazilian gift for naked Indians. They themselves do not use
513 hammocks, but sleep on straw mats. They would not dream of
296 washing their clothes; their shirts looked loam-colored, like their
bodies, the earth, the huts.

123 The good Bororo had been spoiled to such an extent that we
177 with our modest barter goods came off badly. They were already
such experts that they wanted only North American axes. Our
beads met with the most approval, but here, too, the women
seemed very particular and /453/ summarily designated the ones
that they did not like with the Portuguese expression which the
catechesis had made current and which distressed us very much,
"porcaria," "piggishness," or "merda," "filth," not to mention
the accompanying "diavo" curses.

Clothing the Indians was therefore not to be accomplished.

177 Agriculture. The Bororo were supposed to clear and plant!
241 In practice the officers thanked their lucky stars if they succeeded
in saving from the Bororo the plantings laid out by the soldiers.

As soon as the natives had axes, they found far greater pleasure
in chopping down the pikf trees than in climbing up them and re-
moving the fruit. In the military colony there was a fine
canavial, a planting of sugar cane. A watch had to be posted in
[264] order to prevent devastation. Nevertheless, the Indians paid
nightly visits and found a way to conceal them and to deceive
their patrons; they did not break the plants, but lay down on
the ground, bit into the cane as it stood, and contentedly sucked
on it. The mandioca planting was completely looted; the women,
accustomed to digging out roots in the forest, pulled up the plants
that were not a meter long and went on grubbing busily to see
whether more roots might be hidden in the ground. The hunter
tribe had no understanding at all for systematic planting, but
above all no patience to wait until the root had reached its full
development.

177 The soldiers could not very well solve the problem of making
648 gardeners out of these clumsy fellows. The task would have
been a difficult test of patience even for other men who would
have devoted themselves to it, not merely by command or to